Infections put your patients at risk for sepsis. You play a critical role, especially in this vital time. Sepsis is the body’s extreme response to an infection. It is a life-threatening medical emergency. Sepsis happens when an infection a patient already has—in the skin, lungs, urinary tract, or somewhere else—triggers a chain reaction throughout the body. Without timely treatment, sepsis can rapidly lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

**SEPSIS STATS**

- **Each year, at least 1.7 MILLION adults in America develop sepsis.**
- **Nearly 270,000 Americans die as a result of sepsis each year.**
- **1 in 3 patients who dies in a hospital has sepsis.**

**WHAT CAUSES SEPSIS?**

Most sepsis is caused by bacterial infections, but it can be a complication of other infections, including viral infections, such as COVID-19 or influenza.

The most frequently identified pathogens that cause infections that can develop into sepsis include *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph), *Escherichia coli* (E. coli), and some types of *Streptococcus*. SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, can have a similar presentation and a similar clinical course to some forms of sepsis. Many patients who require hospitalization for COVID-19 meet the definition of sepsis, such as those who require assistance with breathing.

Almost any type of infection can lead to sepsis. Infections that lead to sepsis most often start in the:

- Lung
- Urinary tract
- Skin
- GI tract

Anyone can get an infection, and almost any infection can lead to sepsis. Some people are at higher risk:

- **65+**
  - Adults 65 or older
- **Health conditions**
  - People with chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes, lung disease, cancer, and kidney disease
- **Weakened immune systems**
  - People with weakened immune systems
- **Sepsis Survivors**
- **Children younger than one**

**WHO IS AT RISK?**
WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SEPSIS?

A patient with sepsis might have one or more of the following signs or symptoms:

- High heart rate or low blood pressure
- Fever, shivering, or feeling very cold
- Confusion or disorientation
- Shortness of breath
- Extreme pain or discomfort
- Clammy or sweaty skin

Patients with sepsis should be urgently evaluated and treated.

HOW CAN I GET AHEAD OF SEPSIS?

As a healthcare professional you can:

- **Know sepsis signs and symptoms** to identify and treat patients early.
- **Act fast** if you suspect sepsis.
- **Prevent infections** by following infection control practices (e.g., hand hygiene, appropriate catheter management) and ensuring patients receive recommended vaccines.
- **Educate your patients and their families about**:
  - Preventing infections
  - Keeping cuts clean and covered until healed
  - Managing chronic conditions
  - Recognizing early signs and symptoms of worsening infection and sepsis, and seeking immediate care if signs and symptoms are present

What are the signs and symptoms of sepsis?

Sepsis is a medical emergency. Protect your patients by acting fast. Your fast recognition and treatment can increase your patients’ chances of survival.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT SEPSIS?

Know your facility’s existing guidance for diagnosing and managing sepsis.

- **Immediately alert the clinician in charge if it is not you.**
- **Start antibiotics as soon as possible in addition to other therapies appropriate for the patient.** Once the specific cause of sepsis is known, such as a positive test for COVID-19, therapy can be targeted, and empiric broad-spectrum antibiotics might not be needed.
- **Check patient progress frequently.** Always remember to prescribe the right antibiotic, at the right dose, for the right duration, and at the right time. Reassess antibiotic therapy to stop or tailor treatment based on the patient’s clinical condition and diagnostic test results as appropriate.

To learn more about sepsis and how to prevent infections, visit [www.cdc.gov/sepsis](http://www.cdc.gov/sepsis) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

**KNOW THE RISKS. SPOT THE SIGNS. ACT FAST.**